

A forum to encourage independent thinking

# The THINK Club

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**A Road To Nowhere:  
The State of Mass Transit in the US**

**What's The Fuss about Ebola?**

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# Letters



## *Thinking Wildly*

The *THINK Club* is published quarterly by The THINK Club Publications, a forum to encourage independent thinking among fellow human beings.

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*Just because something doesn't do what you planned it to do doesn't mean it's useless.*

*The production of too many useful things results in too many useless people.*

*Men are born ignorant, not stupid. They are made stupid by education.*

*The stupid neither forgive nor forget; the naïve forgive and forget; the wise forgive but do not forget.*

*Always remember that no matter how useless you feel, you are someone's reason to smile.*

*Dear Math, please grow up and solve your own problems, I'm tired of solving them for you.*

*Fear is the main source of superstition, and one of the main sources of cruelty. To conquer fear is the beginning of wisdom ...*

— Bertrand Russell

*“Put your hand on a hot stove for a minute, and it seems like an hour. Sit with a pretty girl for an hour, and it seems like a minute. That's relativity.”*

— Albert Einstein

*Sometimes I wonder if men and women really suit each other. Perhaps they should live next door and just visit now and then.*

— Katharine Hepburn

*Whenever I'm caught between two evils, I take the one I've never tried.*

— Mae West



# Editorial



## A Road to Nowhere

By Anil Shrivastava

After returning to Detroit from India, I pretended to be an ordinary tourist who wanted to enjoy the great Motor City and the pure state of Michigan (Pure Michigan is the new state moniker). I followed the signs of ground transportation at the McNamara terminal of Metro Detroit Airport. The sign led me to a desolate desk attended by a stoic lady.

“Hi M’am! How do you do?” I asked.

“Fine!” she replied insipidly as if she meant, “cut to the chase weirdo.”

“Well M’am, I have to go to Troy Marriott. Do we have any public transportation such as a bus service or local trains to take me there?”

“There are no trains here. We don’t have buses either. You may find shuttles on the lower level,” she answered.

“Well, I was already there and those shuttles only go to the parking lots and surrounding hotels. I have to go to Troy,” I insisted.

“What do you want me to do? Go and rent a car,” she spoke sternly.

“See Mam, first of all, I have never driven in the USA. Besides, I can’t afford to rent a car every time I need to go somewhere. I am looking for public transportation.”

“I don’t understand what you want. I am very busy here. I can get you a cab,” she seemed to be at her wit’s end.

“How much will that cost?”

“The luxury cab will cost you \$105 plus tip and a regular cab will cost \$85 plus tips for going to Troy,” She answered dismissively.

“Well Mam, I am an ordinary tourist. That would be quite expensive for me. Can I share the ride with other passengers?”

“No, you’ll have the entire cab to yourself,” she answered.

I made a quick calculation. That would have been 11% of my monthly salary in India. “So, how do the ordinary people like me commute here?” I asked.

“They have their own cars,” she answered.

“But how about foreign visitors like me who want to travel the great city of Detroit and the pure state of Michigan?”

“None of my business,” She snapped to shut me up.

Coming out of imposture, the whole experience seemed very puzzling to me. America’s infrastructure used to be an example for the rest of the world. Almost

from the beginning of the republic America built canals and roadways. In the 19th century a transcontinental railway was constructed linking the east and west coasts and between 1956 and 1992 America constructed the interstate system, among the largest public-works projects in history, which crisscrossed the continent with nearly 50,000 miles of motorways.

The American transit system is in shambles now. The absence of a true high-speed rail is a continuing embarrassment to the nation. America’s fastest and most reliable line, the north-eastern corridor averages a sluggish 70 miles per hour between Washington and Boston. The French TGV from Paris to Lyon, by contrast, runs at an average speed of 140mph. America’s trains aren’t just slow; they are always late. The train journey between Detroit and Chicago is always unreliable and dangerous. Trains creep out of main city stations and pause at intervals, inexplicably, as they travel through the suburbs of Detroit.

Air travel is no relief either. Airport delays at hubs like Chicago and Atlanta are as bad as in any underdeveloped country. Overbooked airports frequently lead to runway congestion, forcing travelers to spend long hours stranded on the tarmac while they wait to take off or disembark. Airport conditions in major cities like New York can bring tears to one’s eyes. Mass transit in major American cities does not exist with the exception of New York, Boston, Washington DC and San Francisco. America’s dependence on its cars is reinforced by a shortage of alternative forms of transport. Many will argue otherwise, but the fact remains, “if you build them, they will come.”

The Congress and the President are not doing anything about this either. The government is paralyzed due to partisanship. The American public seems to care less. Their focus is on same-sex marriage, abortion rights, and diversity. This is all due to years of social engineering by Hollywood and the media. Roads, bridges and railways used to be neutral ground on which the parties could come together to support the country’s growth. Political bitterness has become even worse at the expense of public works. It’s time to address the real issues in the upcoming election in 2016. If not, our ranking of business climate will slide down further from the seventh position that we hold now.

# Observation



## That Was the Life that Was

By Anil Shrivastava

My high school friend once told me an amazing story about an old man. He (my friend) worked in a multi-story office complex where he used to park next to the parking spot reserved for an old man in his eighties. The old man was a mystery to my friend who drove a very expensive S-class Mercedes sedan. My friend and the old man used to come very early in the morning and used to exchange greetings.

My friend always wondered about the old man and thought that he might be a retired person who came to pass time in the building facility. After all, the office complex was very luxurious and it had numerous amenities including a large fitness center. My friend talked to me about this mysterious old man on several occasions.

One day the old man approached my friend smilingly and wanted to know about him. They talked for a few minutes. Obviously the old man was very gregarious and took interest in knowing about strangers. He asked my friend to come to his office on the fourteenth floor so that they could come to know each other more intimately. My friend accepted the invitation and proceeded to see the old man after a few hours. The fourteenth floor was the highest floor in building and my friend was not aware that he needed a code for the elevator to take him to the fourteenth floor. He returned to his desk in frustration and narrated the story to his colleagues. To his dismay, his colleagues were taken aback listening to the story. They told him that the old man he was referring to owned that building. Not only that, he owned a big oil company and was a close friend of then president, George Herbert Walker Bush.

My friend approached the building custodian who called the old man's personal assistant. Lo and behold, after a few minutes the old man personally walked up to my friend's office to take him to his floor. My friend asked him in amazement how he knew where his cubicle was. The old man replied, "I have seen you working here through the window." There was a commotion in the office. Everyone was wondering what the old man was up to.

Anyway, my friend was amazed to see his fourteenth floor suite. It was like a set from a big Hollywood movie. The old man was lived a life that dreams are made of. They talked mostly about India and the cultural differences between the U.S. and the old country. On his return, my

friend was treated like a celebrity. Everyone thought that the old man must have offered him something big.

I was in Corpus Christie Texas visiting my friend on November 21, 2014. My friend brought the local newspaper to me where the headline was the demise of Mr. Charlie Winn, the old man. His obituaries were carried in all major newspapers including the Wall Street Journal and New York Times. What I read about Mr. Winn will amaze everyone. Here are some excerpts from various publications:

- Charlie is survived by his beloved wife Patsy of more than 64 years. He loved her immensely and gave all the credit for his success to his wife's support.
- He spent his spare time with his family including his grandchildren. For him the birthdays of his members of the family was as important as Christmas.
- He could not complete his college because he had no money for the tuition. Therefore, he paid College tuitions for his employee's kids.
- He asked his employees to feed the poor at his expense. One time he found a person stranded on the roadside. He immediately asked one of his employees to feed him and buy him an airline ticket to his home.
- He sent flowers to every woman in the entire office building on Valentine's Day.

"Apart from that, Charlie was the founder, Chairman and President of his family-owned oil company, Winn Exploration, Co. His company has operations in Texas, Arkansas, Louisiana, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Utah, Wyoming, Australia and Canada. Winn Exploration also has interests in real estate development, commercial and investment banking, nanotechnology, and medical research and development.

In September 2001, Mr. Winn was recognized by the Texas House of Representatives for his "contributions to the communities of Eagle Pass and Uvalde and to the State of Texas." He was awarded Señor Amistad ("Mr. Friendship") in 1984 and 1999 by the International Good Neighbor Council "in recognition of devoted efforts in promoting friendly international relations between the United States of America and Mexico."

I returned from Texas with fond memories of a humanitarian I never met.

# Humor



## English Is Spoken Here

By Anil Shrivastava 'Musafir'

Just because you may be fluent in English doesn't mean folks will understand half the things you say at their places of business. Plain English seems to be in particularly short supply when it comes to business.

For instance, on my recent visit to India, a couple of my checks bounced because I didn't write 'only' in front of the amount to be paid. So, I rushed to the nearest CITI Bank branch and asked the banker why were my checks not honored?

"You didn't write a complete sentence. That's why," replied Dave Ramsey.

"But I don't have to write a sentence, I have to only mention the amount and denomination"

"It doesn't tell me how much you want to pay to the payee," he replied.

"Yes, it does, here is the amount," I pointed to the amount on the check"

"But this doesn't tell me where you want to stop. Therefore, it is important to end your sentence with 'only.'

"OK. I'll print 'only' after the amount, but don't call it a sentence," I said to him in frustration, "and how come your name is Dave Ramsey?"

"You may call me Devangna Ramaswaminathan, if you like," he said with a grin.

Of course, these idiosyncrasies are not limited to the Indian businesses only. It could get worse in the United States where one has to remember the exact semantic and idiom in order to convey the meaning. I once checked into a hotel and asked where the exercise room was. The receptionist gave me a blank look. She simply could not comprehend what I asked. Frustrated, I performed a few pushups making a fool of myself in front of other guests.

"I see, you mean the fitness room!" She exclaimed.

I find ordering food at drive-through windows of fast food chains even more challenging. The problem is that every chain calls the same item by a different name. A good example will be smoothie, shakes, Slurpee, slush, etc. So, here I go again. After I finished ordering my food at the drive-through window, the attendant asked me. "Will that be all?"

"Well, I'd like to order a drink."

"Pardon us! We don't have drinks, sir," she replied.

"Come on who are you kidding, I can see them on your menu." I made my point.

"Will that be all," she wanted to wrap up the conversation.

"Didn't I say that I wanted to order a drink?"

"And didn't I tell you S.I.R. that we don't serve drinks in our establishment? Will that be all?" She seemed irritated.

"How about those pictures of coke and coffee that you are displaying on the board?" I tried to remind her.

"So you want a beverage. What kind?" She asked.

"I'd like a mango shake."

"We don't have mango shakes," she replied.

"You have it. I just ordered it last week. Maybe, you call it Slurpee" I was irritated.

"No sir, we don't sell Slurpees either. Will that be all?"

"OK! Let me come inside the store." I was not ready to give up. As I walked inside, I pointed her to the picture of the drinks.

"So, you mean a mango smoothie. Will that be all?" she replied calmly. Finally, I got my order.

Dealing with waiters in formal restaurants is not a piece of cake either. The other day, after finishing my meal, I asked for the bill. The waiter looked clueless at first then he called the manager to talk to me.

"Sir, we don't bill our customers," said the manager to me.

"So, do you serve free meals?" I interrupted him.

"That's not correct either. You'll have to pay here and now," the manager replied.

"I understand. That's why I asked for the bill," I want to avoid a scene.

The manager turned to the waiter and asked, "Didn't this gentleman ask for the check?"

"No sir, he wanted to be billed," replied the waiter. Somehow, the matter was resolved.

I come across these obstacles every day in my life. The worst one was last week when my General Manger took me for lunch and told me, "We have decided to leverage internal efficiencies by enlisting external resources, thus driving a reduction in operating costs, thereby enhancing shareholder value."

Translation: "Your job is eliminated." Bye for now.

# Perspective



## True Tales of the Elderly

By Robert Bickmeyer

I've been told there are three things that leave you as you age. One is memory and ...er...uh...I forget the other two. But I always remember what gives me a good laugh.

My mother, from New York where the city is surrounded with toll highways and its five boroughs are connected by many toll bridges, was visiting us in Michigan. On a tour of the area we drove south through Detroit into Windsor, Canada where a customs agent leaned out of his booth, asking, "What country are you citizens of? Why are you coming here?" After we answered his questions the agent smiled and told us to have a nice day as he waved us into Canada. As we drove away Mother said, "That was the friendliest toll collector I have ever seen."

As we pulled out of a restaurant parking lot I noticed a young mother folding a stroller at the trunk of her car. I remarked to my wife, who has congestive heart failure, "I'm glad we're beyond that stage of our lives. What a bother." Phyllis replied, "Oh yeah, how about my folding wheel chair in our trunk?"

At a senior breakfast we were discussing the pros and cons of the elderly shovelling snow. One man bragged, "I like the exercise from shovelling it." Another said he simply walked behind his self-propelled snowblower while another said he hired someone to remove his snow as even the cold air is bad for the heart. I reminisced, "I, too, hire someone but when I was younger I shovelled my walks and when I wisely stopped to rest my rapidly pumping heart I lit a cigarette."

After asking for her senior discount in a greeting card store the lady in front of me put three identical cards on the counter. They read, "To My Best Friend."

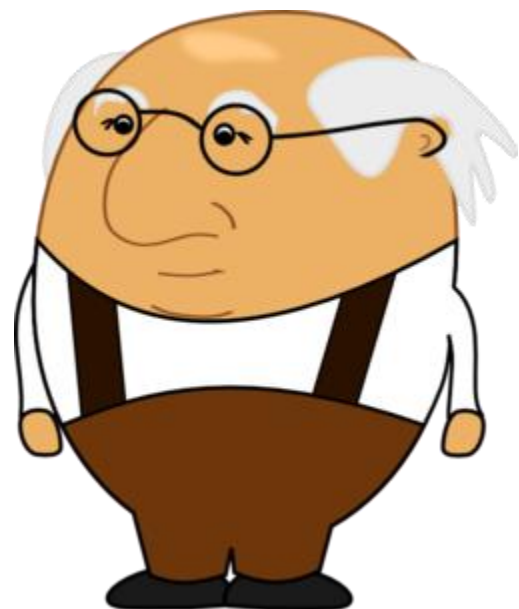
After our over-55 senior softball team's annual golf outing we had pizza and beer in the backyard of our leftfielder's home. As we sat at poolside re-

hashing our season, making wisecracks and good conversation I noticed a teammate in his 70s, sitting hunched over, chin on his chest. I asked the others, "Is Bill sleeping? With all this lively conversation?" Doug answered, "Either he's sleeping or he died."

A friend had a heated debate with his wife about a rule in the card game, Bridge. He found the correct explanation in a book of rules on Bridge and gleefully showed her that "according to Hoyle" he was right. His wife sneered, "That's an old book."

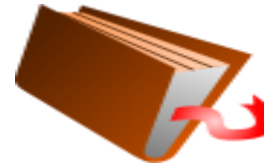
We were lunching at our favorite restaurant after a softball game when our friendly waitress teased one of the men. He said, "You women are all alike. I have one at home." He then added, "There are two ways to handle women...but I don't know either one of them."

My wife, Phyllis, and I were taking a walk, our ten-month-old grandson in my arms. An elderly, dignified lady stopped us, saying to Phyllis, "Isn't he cute. He's absolutely adorable! How old is he?" Before Phyllis could answer, I said, "I'll be 60 in July." ("I'll be 60 in July" was many years ago)



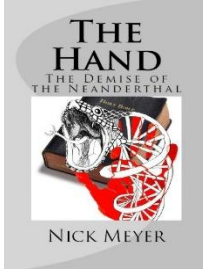


# Book Review



## The hand: the Demise of the Neanderthal by Nick Meyer

"A captivating read. Right from the start of the novel, I was drawn in by the compelling dedication through the words of Dalai Lama...The first page got me rather intrigued, and I haven't lost my interest till the very end. As I finished, I asked myself: what is worthier in this book - the plot or the premise? And I couldn't decide... It's more than just a nostalgic look at the Neanderthals. It's a message, quite a significant one. It's an honest look at our society and how much we need to learn from history (even such an ancient one!) to make it better; it's a bold venture into the mysteries of human mind and spirit; it's an undaunted analysis of meditation and thought travel, of the power of touch, of the quirks of destiny, of mutation and inbreeding, of the apparent connection between religious texts and major historic developments, and finally the all-present DNA. I have to admit, this novel made me scramble and refresh my knowledge of history by googling all sorts of sites – and that's a good thing: if a book does that – it's part of its merit. I admired the ease with which the author dealt with both the past (very, very remote past in history) and the present moment, changing from one to the other effortlessly within the plot. As for the writing style, interestingly, it reminded me of reading a play - each movement of the characters described so much in detail, though more so in the sections covering the present... All in all, this book gave me a lot of food for thought." –Reviewed by Irene Rudra

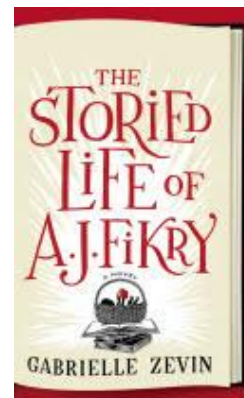


relationship (if only she could think "his way"...) and seemingly cannot escape from the "cage he had built long ago to save himself from love". Both agree that Sahara can somehow be a magic remedy for them; and for both, as Port declares, the following is true: "We've never managed, either of us, to get all the way into life. We're hanging onto the outside for all we're worth, convinced we are going to fall off at the next bump. "The third companion plays the part only to the extent of being a pawn - they resort to him when needed and then they avoid him. Not that he doesn't deserve such treatment - for he has his own selfish motives that brought him on this journey. The first part of the book is mostly this kind of pensive mental struggle, in the second one - the struggle becomes physical, brought on by the alien to them climate and culture and by other trials. From this point

it becomes more than just painful philosophical ruminations on life and their place in it. Struggle for survival ensues. For one of them the end is ambiguous. A local man observes to Kit: "Here we say that life is a cliff, and you must never turn around and look back when you are climbing". But even a statement like that, close to the end of the book, could not lift the oppressively heavy feeling I had after reading it. The book wore me out. Emotionally. Plus, one thing that I thought lacking - the history of the couple's relationship leading up to this extraordinary and tragic trip through North Africa (the meager hints of that didn't seem to be enough). "

–Reviewed by Irene Rudra

## The Storied Life of A.J.Fikry by Gabrielle Zevin



"Books about books are my weakness, as well as books about librarians, booksellers, etc. And I loved this one. A delightful and uplifting novel, with a matter-of-fact tone that doesn't annoy at all. An interesting format, too: each chapter starting with one short story description by the protagonist bookseller to someone special in his life. It would be hard to describe this book without revealing the plot, so I

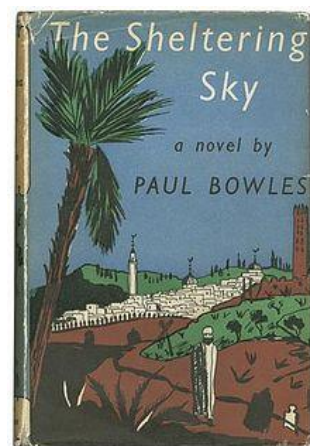
will limit myself to a couple of quotes, both uttered by the protagonist – the first one compares people to literature: "We are not quite novels... We are not quite short stories... In the end, we are collected works. He has read enough to know there are no collections where each story is perfect. Some hits. Some misses. If you're lucky, a stand out..." And, one more – on the subject of books that he really, really loves, A.J.Fikry, this unforgettable bookseller, ventures, in his typical, reserved manner: "Every word the right one and exactly where it should be. That's basically the highest compliment I can give." Very simply put, but it surely hits the mark..."

–Reviewed by Irene Rudra

## The Sheltering Sky by Paul Bowles

"I think this is one of those books that are open to wide interpretation. Apart from eloquent description of the Sahara desert and its culture, it's a daring and exploratory trip into human psyche.

On the surface of it a young American couple (even though in name only, for the moment), moderately seasoned by travel up to this point, with another friend by their side, escape to

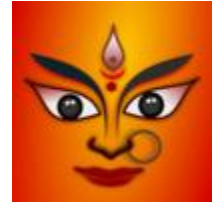


travel in North Africa, away from Europe, ravaged by Second World War. That's one thing. But dig deeper, and there is more to it. The two main characters agonizingly struggle with their feelings and intentions, revealing them (in their own minds) with brutal honesty that brings forth painful, raw emotions. Kit is fighting a feeling of constant doom that sometimes totally paralyzes her, leaving her deeply unhappy and disturbed; Port is dealing with issues of rekindling their

# Essay

## Learn from India or Leave Her Alone

By Anil Shrivastava 'Musafir'



Lately, there have been rampant attacks on India by the western press and their political leaders blaming her people of being religiously intolerant and rape mongers. These attacks stem from ignorance and Hindu phobia. Even President Obama made a parting shot at Mr. Modi during his recent visit to India, "Nowhere is it going to be more necessary to uphold (religious faith) than in India. India will succeed so long as it is not splintered on religious lines."

India has been there for thousands of years, unique and all encompassing. The rest of the world should learn from her uniqueness and not pass moral judgment on her. Here are some facts to support my statement.

According to [National Human Rights Commission of India](#) and [National Commission for Minorities](#), over 2005 to 2009 period, an average of 130 people died in India every year from communal violence which equates to about 0.01 deaths per 100,000 population. Though I could not find the number of deaths due to hate crime in the USA, according to the FBI hate crime statistics, there were 1,318 anti-religious crimes reported in 2011. A number of them were conducted against Sikhs, Muslims, Jews and Hindus. In 2014, 5,928 hate crimes were reported in the US which comes to around 2 per 100,000 people.

Even one murder or rape is too many. However, the United States ranks 9th among all nations in number of rapes committed. India's position is a distant 46th. According to the National Violence Against Women Survey, 1 in 6 U.S. women and 1 in 33 U.S. men have experienced an attempted or completed rape in their lifetime. More than a quarter of college-age women report having experienced a rape or rape attempt since age 14. Overall, only 16% of the total cases are reported. The rate of rape in the US is 28.6 per 100,000 people. In India it is 1.6 per 100,000. According to the FBI report, here is a table of rapes committed per 100,000 people in various states of the United States of America:

The uniqueness of Indian culture lies in its geographical diversities, natural wealth, vast population and people's attitude among other things. There are few countries, which have extreme climatic conditions like India has. When people in the northern parts of the country would be shivering with chilling cold one can find people in the south bare feet.

The uniqueness of Indian culture is its composite and pluralistic nature. In no other part of the world has religious and cultural plurality co-existed and cross-fertilized each other so creatively. While Christians fought their denominational wars in the western hemisphere, Indian

Christianity remained free from confessional conflicts and sectarian tensions. Shias and Sunnis in India do not kill each other as their counterparts do in our neighborhood. Sikhism and Sufi mysticism witness the synergy of Hinduism and Islam. These, are the authentic signs of the vitality and creativity of Indian culture. Togetherness is the essential character of our way of life. It is this spirit of togetherness that welcomes and blends diverse elements that seem disparate outside of that framework. India is a unique example of spiritual and cultural unity-in-diversity that should be adopted by the rest of the world.

### 2012 FBI Crime Report

State	Rape Cases per 100,000 Population
Alaska	79.7
South Dakota	70.2
Michigan	46.4
New Mexico	45.9
Arkansas	42.3
Oklahoma	41.6
Colorado	40.7
North Dakota	38.9
<b>USA</b>	<b>28.6</b>
<b>INDIA</b>	<b>1.6</b>

People of India are as diverse as it can get. In the vast stretches of the countryside one will not have to travel more than twenty five miles to meet with the people of different social upbringing, different occupation, different life style with different tongues and opinion of the world. Sometimes one wonders how these people are so well knit together when they hardly share physical or spiritual aspects of culture with one another. It's very difficult to answer this question but perhaps the rockiest bond between these people is the nationality. The sense of belonging to one nation, the shared history, the common legacy, the common national movement and more than anything else, the tolerance for each other has kept India united. India is unified by its diversity. Although that might sound a little too contradictory, the uniqueness of Indian culture lies in the underlying harmony on the face of apparent multiplicity of language, literature, music, visual arts and religion. All these small beliefs and practices coalesce together to form a composite culture.

The rest of the world should try to learn from India before poking holes in her character. People who live in glass houses shouldn't throw stones on others.



# Current Affairs



## Life in Ferguson, Missouri

By Anil Shrivastava

Life in Ferguson Missouri (a suburb of St. Louis) was quite normal and peaceful until Michael Brown, an 18-year-old black man, was fatally shot by Darren Wilson, 28, a white police officer on August 9, 2014.

Brown and his friend Dorian Johnson were walking down the middle of the street, shortly after robbing a convenience store owned by an opportunist entrepreneur of Asian-Indian descent who came to this country with only eight dollars in his pocket and built a life for his family and himself in a temporal way. Brown and Dorian also confronted the Asian-Indian shopkeeper and scuffled with him for justice and equality. As I said earlier, Life in Ferguson Missouri was quite normal and peaceful until Michael Brown, an 18-year-old black man, was fatally shot by Darren Wilson, 28, a white police officer on August 9, 2014.

Soon after the robbery, Brown and his friend were walking the streets of free America minding their own business when a racist White cop, Darren Wilson interrupted their pursuit of happiness, one of the unalienable rights granted to all Americans mentioned in the United States Declaration of Independence. The cop asked Brown and his friend to move to the sidewalk. Brown, an oppressed but a self-respecting brave man got reminded of the age-old injustice and tyranny of the Blacks at the hands of a White majority. He decided not to give up and struggled through the window of the police vehicle until Wilson's coercive gun was fired as a result of the struggle. Brown and his friend fled in different directions. In the entire altercation Wilson fired several shots. One of the shots ended Brown's glorious life.

The shooting sparked protests and unrest in Ferguson. Stores were burnt and looted and houses were vandalized symbolizing black anger against the unfair white establishment. The response of area police agencies in dealing with the protests received significant criticism from the media and politicians. The talking

heads on the television drew a parallel between the Ferguson incident and the Civil Rights Movement of the fifties and sixties.

A few days after the shooting, the Ferguson Police Department hurtfully released a video of the convenience store robbery that occurred only minutes before the shooting. The timing of the video release received criticism from the unbiased media as malicious and untimely. It was labeled as an impediment to the advancement of the civil rights.

On August 18, President Obama announced that the Department of Justice had launched an independent, federal civil rights investigation into Brown's death. On August 22 Supreme Court Justice, Ruth Ginsberg said in an interview with *The National Law Journal* that the events at Ferguson point to a "real racial problem" in the U.S. On September 4, Eric Holder announced that the Justice Department will investigate Ferguson police force for possible misconduct or discrimination

Unfortunately, none of the above mattered to the racist grand jury who announced on November 24 that the policeman had acted in self-defense and appropriately. Following the grand jury announcement, protests, some of them violent, broke out in Ferguson and other cities across the United States. Several Ferguson businesses were looted and fires set by protesters—Protests erupted in cities across the US including, St Louis, Philadelphia, Seattle, Albuquerque, New York, Cleveland, Los Angeles, Oakland, Minneapolis, Atlanta, Portland, Chicago and Boston.

Brown is a martyr and will be remembered as the epitome of America's racial problem along with Rodney King and likes.

# Point

## Police Brutality Protests Are Justified

By Anil Shrivastava 'Musafir'

The recent incidents of police brutality have become a fixture of the news cycle and rightly so. As a matter of fact, there was no reason to gun down Michael Brown in Ferguson, MO or to kill a 12-year-old boy in Cleveland or to choke a cigarette seller to death in New York. These incidents have enraged the citizens and they are rightly protesting police brutality across the US. Police misconduct is a systemic problem in America and the only way to come up with a solution is through mass protest against it.

The police brutality in America seems something like a legal Wild West. Such gun wielding is not heard anywhere in a civilized world. According to the Economist magazine, "Last year, in total, British police officers actually fired their weapons three times. The number of people fatally shot was zero." Unlike other civilized countries, police here are often equipped with weapons powerful enough to conquer a small country. Police use of highly armed SWAT teams has risen by 1,500 percent in the last two decades, and many police departments have cultivated an "us vs. them" mentality toward the public they ostensibly serve. Although possession of these weapons does not cause misconduct, as the old saying goes, when you have a hammer everything begins to look like a nail.

The public face of a police brutality victim is a young man who is Black or Latino. For example, the "stop and frisk" policy has been explicitly aimed only at black men. Since 2008, this has led to 99,980 stops which did *not* produce an arrest in a Florida city with a population of just 110,000. One man alone was stopped 258 times at his job in four years, and arrested for trespassing while working on 62 occasions. Failure to address this issue communicates to police that minorities are a safe target for abuse.

In the above contexts, attempting to raise awareness about police brutality through a civic protest is well justified. Coupled with additional reforms like providing better training for dealing with minorities and body camera use could produce a significant decrease in police misconduct. Hopefully the widespread protest against police brutality will bring about the needed change and will create a trustworthy relationship between the police and the citizens they are supposed to serve and protect.

# Counterpoint

## Protests Against Police Unjustified

By Bala Prasad

This is America, where one has the right to strike and protest. These rights of action have been among the forces that have brought this great country so far in such a short period of time – just two and a half centuries. Who can forget the strikes of the UAW from the last century that brought so much benefit – all deserved – to the autoworkers of this country? Who also can forget the benefits that society reaped from peaceful marches and protests led by the likes of Reverend Martin Luther King Jr, including the advances in civil rights and social justice that those actions drove?

Now, however, we have marchers and protesters who advocate burning down our cities and death to police officers. One must not forget that these protestors are the ones who reap the most benefit from the intervention of police officers in everyday life. There is nothing wrong in taking a case of this nature to a court of public opinion, but not by trying to mandate the destruction of the very society that we live in. In matters of confrontation with keepers of law and order in a civil society, the latter must always prevail. By no means am I suggesting that the other party should be maimed or mangled, but if one is told by a police officer to hold his hands up or lie down on the ground, one has to follow that command. It is not a request that one can refuse, and certainly this is not the time to point out who is wrong. Society demands that part come later – either in the court of public opinion or in a judicial court. Why put one's own life on the line for what may be an inconsequential incident?

The concept of this article was guided by two recent events – one in Missouri and the other in New York. According to news reports, people died for no reason; in both cases, Grand Juries found the police officers Not Guilty. Surely they had much more detailed information about the incidents than we will ever have, and no decision that anyone makes – including each of us in our own day to day lives – will satisfy everyone. Court decisions are not infallible, which is why we have higher courts to appeal to, and we all know that sometimes court decisions are reversed. But no matter the decision of whichever court – even the United States Supreme Court - it cannot satisfy everybody. However, once a decision is made, we must obey. We may march, and we may protest, but we certainly may not destroy the society that we live in by proposing to burn it or kill the police force.

When O.J. Simpson was found Not Guilty, there were no riots, no marches, not even a protest. We all accepted the fact that the jury has spoken, and that's that. Therefore, why so much doubt over the actions and decisions of the Grand Juries here? It seems to this writer that if one hides behind the façade of principle, one should be offended by both or none.

# Family



## Safety Tips for our Children

By Dr. Niru Prasad, MD

Sadly the summer is almost over and before we know it schools all over the states will open and our parents will have to take certain safety precautions during school preparations for their children to have a very safe academic performance at school.

1. Shopping season starts with appropriate clothing according to seasons and their school supplies. Remember 3 L while dressing up kids light, loose and layered.
2. Proper nutrition at home and at school should be emphasized.
3. Health physicals including sports and proper immunizations. Almost all the pediatrics offices as well ambulatory cares have recent guidelines regarding proper immunizations according to the academy of pediatrics.
4. Preseason athletic activities start in mid-august and children's should get involved with to prevent them from sports injury.
5. Summer reading as well preparation for next grade at school should be emphasized during preseason months, only so that once school opens kids are at the same level as rest of the class.

It is very important to talk with children regarding safety issues since safety is still the priority concern of most parents. As well as school.

### What are the major safety issues:



1. walking to and from school with friends or care takers. Never walk alone especially if it gets dark.

2. if your child is just a few blocks walk from home and a stranger is following him he should turn back to school and find a teacher or school guard.

3. Try a password system while getting a ride. Arrange a secret password between you and your kids, something they will never tell others. Hence, if parents are late sometime and ask a friend for a ride they should be made aware of this password. Do not ask your child to share a ride with anyone else.

Kids should be taught as to never talk to stranger or get a ride from anyone they do not know.

Backpack safety: kids backpacks should not be heavy, should not have electronics, and kids' names should not be put in the back of the school bag.

While waiting at bus stops they should follow some discipline, stay in line while riding the bus and be polite to their friends.

### Lastly – Bullying Prevention



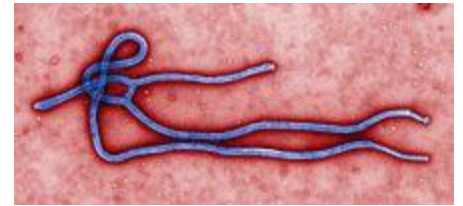
Sadly there are lots of friends at school with rude abnormal behaviors. Children should be advised to stay away from trouble and do not get involved with fights.

Drug issues are another issue among our students, as well violent behaviors and parents should be very open talking to their kids regarding this issue.

We wish all our kids to have a very safe, successful school year and our parents can help them a lot by sharing these safety precaution tips.



# Lifestyle



## Ebola Virus Disease

By Niru Prasad MD

Ebola Virus Disease, also known as hemorrhagic fever, is a serious life threatening disease caused by Ebola virus. This virus is transmitted to human beings from wild animals such as fruit bats, monkeys, gorillas, chimpanzees, and antelopes. According to a recent news article from World Health Organization in 2014, the deadly outbreak in west and central Africa and other third world countries has seen a mortality rate that has climbed to 50-75%.

Scientists have identified 5 strains of the virus, of which four cause disease in humans by direct contact with body fluids from infected persons. A person remains infectious as long as their blood and body fluids, including breast milk and semen, contain the virus.



Ebola virus

### What is the incubation period?

The incubation period, which is the time interval from infection to symptoms, is roughly 2 to 21 days.

### What are the symptoms of disease?

The early symptoms include: fatigue, muscle aches, headaches, and sore throat. Later, these symptoms are followed by high fever, vomiting, diarrhea, rash, kidney and liver problems, and bruises over the body followed by bleeding from gums, intestinal bleeding, etc. Blood tests among infected individuals show low levels of platelets and white counts as well elevated liver enzymes.

### What are the treatments modalities?

The supportive treatments include oral and intravenous fluids to prevent dehydration, and secondary infection control by antibiotics. There are no proven treatments available, however, supportive treatments include transfusion of blood products, immune therapy, and new experimental drugs which are being investigated for treatment. There are no new licensed vaccines available on the market; however, daily research is being done at the World Health Organization centers for control of disease for licensing adequate vaccines.



### Prevention and control of disease

Good outbreak control relies on applying a combination of interventions, namely case management, surveillance and contact tracing, quality lab services, and social mobilization. Community engagement is key to successfully controlling the outbreak. The risk reduction measures include reducing the risk of wildlife to human transmission contact with infected animals, reducing consumption of raw meats, and using personal protective measures such as gloves, masks, and gowns while handling the animals as well as body fluids from infected persons.

Further outbreak containment measures include prompt and safe burials of deceased individuals identified as having the virus, and personal safety measures as mentioned above. Health care workers as well as lab workers dealing with vaccines or caring for infected persons should apply extra control measures to prevent contact with patient's blood, body fluids, materials such as clothing, and beddings. Personal protective measures include wearing a mask, safety goggles, clean non-sterile long sleeved gown and gloves.

The World Health Organization aims to prevent Ebola outbreaks by maintaining surveillance for Ebola Virus Disease as well as helping those countries where outbreaks have occurred.

### The take home message for protecting yourself

Wash your hands frequently with soap and water or an alcohol based sanitizer, avoid touching blood or body fluids such as urine, feces, saliva, or sweat of an infected person, avoiding contact with infected clothing, needles or medical equipment, and recognize the early symptoms and signs of disease.

# Analysis



## 21st Century School Violence

By Robert Bickmeyer

Violence will always be with us and will never be eliminated, but why does it permeate America's 21st century society in ways it never has before?

Let us focus on school and teenage violence. Since 1992 there has been at least 296 violent deaths in schools across the nation. How has our society changed? Who is at fault? Is it Hollywood and the entire entertainment industry, Democrats, Republicans, working mothers, deadbeat dads, divorce, schools or the media?

Will our elected leaders in Washington stop using the tragic spree of school violence for political chicanery? Democrats, who accept millions of dollars in campaign contributions from Hollywood, blame guns. Republicans, who accept millions of dollars from the National Rifle Association, blame Hollywood. It is time our power hungry, selfish politicians do what is best for our country instead of their political parties. Congress must point the finger at Hollywood as one of the causes and demand that violence be curbed. About 80 years ago, Hollywood studio heads established the Hays Office and imposed a formal censorship code. Hollywood regulated itself to stave off censorship legislation by Congress. The Hays Office, operating for 40 years, did our country no harm, but dissolving it has done the U.S. irreparable harm as Hollywood has lowered itself into the gutter with unmitigated violence as well as out-of-control immorality.

It is time to reincarnate censorship of violence and immoral behavior in the entire entertainment industry, and that includes movies, television, videos and music. The television industry knows that viewers are influenced by commercials. Obviously, it is just as factual that they are influenced by program content.

When I was growing up, a Hollywood western might have shown about 100 Indians shot while encircling a wagon train and a few settlers taking an arrow in the chest. Never did I see one drop of blood. I recently saw a movie where a man was struck on the head with a toaster. He was pictured, not once, but three times lying unconscious on the floor with not one, but five or six streams of blood lining his face grotesquely. Realism you say? No shock! Why does Hollywood think they must shock us to entertain us? They are creating a sick society, immune to violence, thus more likely to act violently. It is Hollywood that is sick. Can't anyone stop them?

Many words offensive to minorities are deemed politically incorrect and are banned. These censorships are

made with good judgment and are not considered violations of the First Amendment. Why then can't we use equally good judgment in our entertainment industry to ban violence, pornography and obscenities that are offensive to God fearing people? A giant step would be taken toward minimizing school violence and a multitude of other problems in our country.

Another contributing cause are those working moms who don't have to work, but do for selfish reasons, such as having their own career or a bigger house and assorted household goodies. I applaud and sympathize with those moms who must work because of despicable deadbeat dads or whose husbands are unfortunately unable to fully provide for the family. The most important career a mother can have is raising her children. The children suffer when tiny tots are raised by day care and teenagers receive no care. There is evidence that preschool children benefit from time with a stay-at-home parent. They have less anger and develop feelings of trust and security in the parent and are less likely to be disobedient and aggressive as they get older. Teenage girls get pregnant and juvenile crimes are committed mostly between 3p.m. and 6p.m. on work days, when there are no parents at home.

Divorce has become too easy. If a marriage has produced no children I doubt that society cares if a couple rescinds their vows. However, those parents who put their own happiness above that of their children are most selfish. Children want and need both parents until about age 18. Children of divorced parents are often angry children and angry children are prone to violence. All 50 states must toughen their divorce laws whereby families cannot be easily torn apart on the selfish whims of one or both parents.

Speaking in Newtown, Conn., President Obama said, "We will be told that the causes of such violence are complex and that is true. But that can't be an excuse for inaction. Surely, we can do better than this." Yes we can. Officials have been unable to ascertain a motive for the Newtown killings. Having their names and picture on the front page of every newspaper and on nationwide television is the fame these nonentities seek, even in death. In fact, one killer of eight left a suicide note, reading, "Now I will be famous." This is true of the copycat crimes of other evil nutcases. We must prevail upon the media to withhold their identity that will take away their motive. This action outweighs the public's right to know.

Continued from Page 16

## LBJ Library and Museum

part of the exhibit. I absolutely loved the display of letters to the First Lady thanking her for beautifying the highways all around America. There's this letter from one kid who said she loved seeing the bluebells along the road instead of the dreary landscape and then there's a letter from a woman who said seeing all those flowers dotting the highway uplifted her spirits.



Taking his oath of office on Air Force One

If you ever visit Austin, Texas, I recommend that you visit the LBJ Library and Museum and experience the times past.

**LBJ Presidential Library**  
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**9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. (all seven days)**

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sense that something isn't there, and  
no chain of reasoning, no matter  
how logical or elegant or brilliant,  
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# American Scene



## Crew Resource Management

By David Beagan

Suppose you are a junior pilot on a plane that is getting ready to land. The instruments indicate there is a problem with the landing gear and the captain is going through his protocol for troubleshooting the problem. He requests from the control tower that the plane be allowed to go into a holding pattern until the issue is resolved. After some time you see that the fuel gauge indicates that the plane is running low on fuel. You let the captain know but in his preoccupation with the landing gear issue, he doesn't really pay attention to what you are saying.

What would you do? It seems that you reject any deference to rank or protocol and do whatever you had to do to make the captain hear you. Incredibly, that's what happened on United Airlines flight 173. The pilot was troubleshooting an indicator light that apparently showed the landing gear in the nose had failed to deploy. Both the first officer and flight engineer warned the pilot that fuel was running low. But apparently, so engrossed was he, that by the time he realized, it was too late and the plane crashed. Post-crash it was determined that the landing gear was properly deployed the whole time, the indicator light was merely burned out.

Other mishaps that could have been avoided with proper communication among the members of the flight crew. Human error caused most accidents, 60-80%. In 1979, NASA investigated. From these mishaps, a standard for flight crew communication emerged call CRM (Crew Resource Management) emerged, along with training to implement the skills required. These mastery of the skills can be challenging because they can run counter to social instincts.

The following five steps represent an assertive statement process developed by a CRM expert. It gives a good idea of what is required of an individual.

- **Opening or attention getter** - Address the individual. "Hey Chief," or "Captain Smith," or "Bob," or however the name or title that will get the person's attention.
- **State your concern** - Express your analysis of the situation in a direct manner while owning your emotions about it. "I'm concerned that we may not have enough fuel to fly around this storm system," or "I'm worried that the roof might collapse."
- **State the problem as you see it** - "We're showing only 40 minutes of fuel left," or "This building has a lightweight steel truss roof, and we may have fire extension into the roof structure."
- **State a solution** - "Let's divert to another airport and refuel," or "I think we should pull some tiles and take a

look with the thermal imaging camera before we commit crews inside."

- **Obtain agreement (or buy-in)** - "Does that sound good to you, Captain?"

On July 19, 1989 United Airlines Flight 232 an engine fan broke apart resulting in the loss all three independent hydraulic systems, leaving the plane with almost no controls and just the two remaining engines. Working together the crew was able to crudely guide the plane by altering power to each of these engines. The landing was rough, but of the 296 people on board, 185 survived. The pilot gives credit to CRM as one of the factors that saved so many lives:

...the preparation that paid off for the crew was something ... called Cockpit Resource Management....Up until 1980, we kind of worked on the concept that the captain was THE authority on the aircraft. What he said, goes. And we lost a few airplanes because of that. Sometimes the captain isn't as smart as we thought he was. And we would listen to him, and do what he said, and we wouldn't know what he's talking about. And we had 103 years of flying experience there in the cockpit, trying to get that airplane on the ground, not one minute of which we had actually practiced, any one of us. So why would I know more about getting that airplane on the ground under those conditions than the other three. So if I hadn't used [CRM], if we had not let everybody put their input in, it's a cinch we wouldn't have made it.

CRM has proven invaluable in saving lives on many other flights.

The basic ideas of CRM have been applied to other fields. Anywhere that the stakes are high, there are several people contributing skills to the situation, and time is of the essence (to varying degrees), is ripe for application of CRM principles. Even considering the five points above, and applying them to real life situations would be of great benefit.

---

People really are our most important resource, and people who don't realize that and choose not to live that way, choose not to lead that way, are paying a price for that in many of our companies, many of our organizations.

– Chesley Sullenberger

# Travelogue



## Visiting Lyndon Baines Johnson Library and Museum,

By Anil Shrivastava



MLK talks to LBJ December 3, 1963

When we talk about equality, social justice and civil rights, we often credit Abraham Lincoln and Martin Luther King Jr, but we always neglect to mention president, Lyndon Baines Johnson (LBJ) in the same vein. It was LBJ who launched Great Society legislation upholding civil rights and the elimination of poverty and racial injustice. He also created Medicare and Medicaid.



Signing of the 1964 Civil Rights Act

So, I decided to pay homage to our thirty-sixth president by visiting the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library and Museum in Austin, Texas. The most striking part about LBJ complex is its simplicity. One can approach it immediately after taking the exit for the University of Texas on Interstate 20. The parking is right at the entrance to the library. It's not really a library. At least visitors are never using it. However, the museum is unintimidating and convenient to walk around. The exhibits of the museum took me back to the future when LBJ was in the White House. It was a tumultuous period in history of America. JFK's death, the Black Civil Rights Movement, the creation of government funding for welfare, NASA, education funding are very vividly displayed.



Replica of the Oval Office

Other amusing displays include a life size robotic figure of former President Johnson sharing stories with his wry sense of humor. A scaled down oval office during his time as president is an interesting

Continued on Page 14

# Mental Exercise

By David Beagan



## Special Food

What food is it where you throw away the outside, then you cook the inside, then you eat the outside and throw away the inside?

## Sands of Time

You have two hourglasses. One can times seven minutes when the sand runs out, the other times 11 minutes. How can you use these two hourglasses to time out 15 minutes?

## Card Game

I propose a card game. You pay me a dollar to play the game. From a standard deck of 52 playing cards, I deal out pairs of cards. If I deal two black cards, you get them. If I deal two red cards I keep them. All the rest are set aside. At the end, if you have more cards, you win three dollars. If you have fewer or the same number of cards you pay nothing more. Is this a good deal for you?

## Spanish Math

Substitute a different numerical digit for letter to make this all add up correctly.

POCO  
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POCO  
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POCO  
POCO  
POCO  
POCO  
POCO  
POCO  
+ POCO  
-----  
MUCHO

## Foot Race

Two sprinters compete in a 100-meter race. Alec crosses the finish line when Zane is just at 97 meters from the start. They decide to race again, with Alec starting 3 meters behind the starting line. If they each run at the same speed as in the first race, who wins the second race?

## Water Holes

What is full of holes and yet is able to hold water.

## What Is This?

A Riddle by Horatio Walpole

Before my birth I had a name,  
But soon as born I chang'd the same;  
And when I'm laid within the tomb,  
I shall my father's name assume.  
I change my name three days together  
Yet live but one in any weather.

## Word Math

What can you add to one to make it gone?

## Answers

### Special Food

Corn on the cob. You throw away the outside husk, eat the corn and throw away the cob inside the corn.

### Sands of Time

Start by flipping both hourglasses. When the seven minute one runs out of sand, set the 11 minute one on its side, leaving 4 minutes of sand in it. Now you can flip the 7 minute timer and at the same time start the 11-minute timer so it will run out the 4 minutes of sand, at which point you now set the 7 minute timer on its side with four minutes of sand in it. Now it's easy to run the full 11 minute time and then four more from the 7 minute timer to get 15 minutes.

### Card Game

No you will always lose the dollar. Your pile of black cards will always have the same number of cards as my pile of red.

### Spanish Math

POCO is 4595 and MUCHO is 68925..

### Foot Race

In the second race, they will both reach 97 meters from the start at the same time. So in the final three meters, Alec will pull in front a bit and win.

### Water Holes

A Sponge.

### What Is This?

Today.

### Word Math

The letter g:  
"g" + "one" = "gone".



# Publisher's Desk



## Minimum Wage and Immigration

By Bala Prasad

Two recent decisions at the national level have left all of us with an opinion, and have divided us like no other issues since abortion, civil rights, and gun control.

The first issue is the minimum wage. It has been raised in many places since January 1st, 2015. Michigan's minimum wage is currently \$8.15/hour and scheduled to increase to \$9.25 in January, 2018. Chicago is currently at \$10.00/hour, and the suburban Seattle, a city where Boeing is located is at \$15.00/hour. Currently, an annual income of \$22,500 a year puts one below the poverty level. If one works full time, 40 hours per week, and still is below poverty level, what is the point? No doubt a minimum wage increase would affect some businesses adversely, but so do other increases in prices. The price of beef has gone up by 40% in the last year. When bad weather prevails in Florida and California, vegetable and fruit prices increase all over America. On the other hand, since the price of gasoline has been cut in half over the last 6 months, society has also benefitted. This is very much like a charitable donation – so many causes to give to, all of them good, but when we give to one, we cannot give to another. Everybody can give only so much; even Bill Gates and Warren Buffet cannot fulfil all the needs of all the causes. So in the opinion of this writer, no rule should be so callous so as to allow one who works full time to remain below a poverty level income.

The second issue is immigration. President Obama has removed a sword from the neck of illegal immigrants who have been in the United States for 5 or more years: they, their wives, and

their children will not suddenly be rounded up and bundled off to their countries of origin if it's discovered that they came illegally. True, they should have been deported; in our civil society these cases should have been addressed a long time ago. But how much time is enough? Every crime in America has a Statute of Limitations, except murder, and those statutes are typically seven years. So, if we brand all these immigrants criminals, the Statute of Limitations cannot be more than the seven year Statute of Limitations period for rape. The criminals among them should be booted out, but for others, it would be inhumane to let them twist in the wind for the foreseeable future. Furthermore, who in their right mind thinks that we could round up and boot out eleven million immigrants? Presidents have come and gone, but this has not happened, nor will it happen, in part because of the sectors of the work force that illegal immigrants have been part of – including lower end, low paying, physically demanding jobs that machines cannot do. If illegals were not a part of this labor pool, it would potentially leave a void in the labor pool for jobs that pay at minimum wage and below.

*Sincerely,*

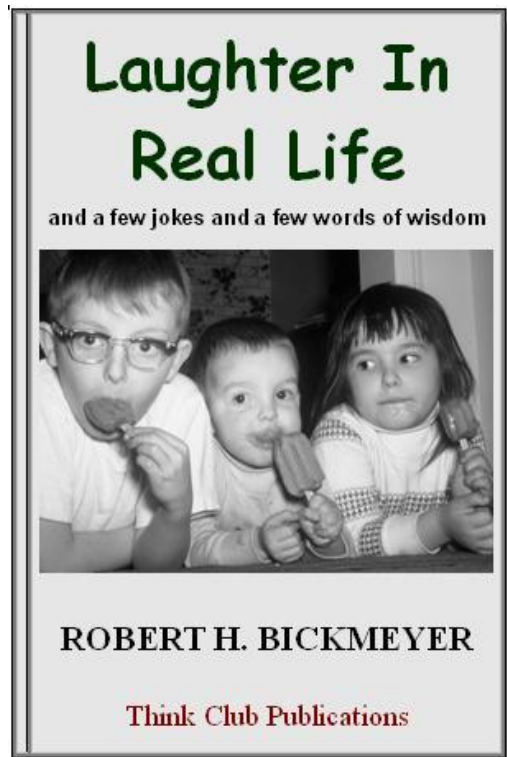
*Bala Prasad*

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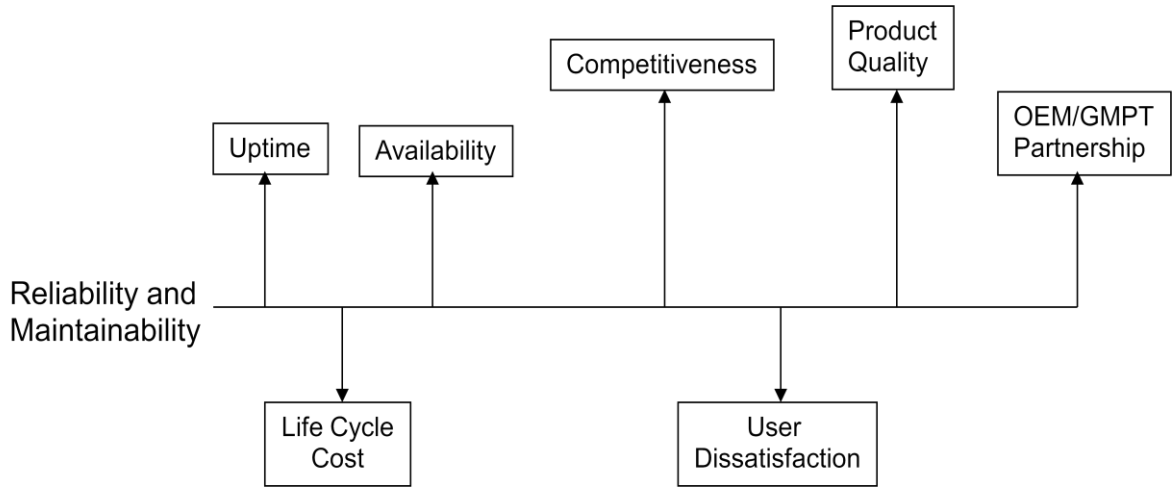
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